



APHIS' Animal Care Report

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

A lot has been happening in fiscal year (FY) 2000 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal Care (AC) program, and the highlights are presented here. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) received a \$1 million increase for operating our program, which will allow us to hire more inspectors, replace high-mileage vehicles, and continue to provide inspectors the tools they need to work efficiently from remote locations.

In March, AC held a public meeting to discuss training and handling of dangerous animals, developed and updated its strategic plan, and moved forward on other policies and regulations. All AC's veterinary medical officers and supervisory animal care specialists attended a training session on issues of inspecting research facilities.

APHIS has also announced that we believe large wild and exotic animals make dangerous pets, an issue that has received considerable media attention in recent months.

We hope you find the report informative and helpful. If you have comments, need to change your address, or would like to subscribe to the hard-copy mailing, please contact us at (301) 734-7255 or ace@usda.gov.

W. Ron DeHaven
Deputy Administrator

AC Holds Public Meeting To Discuss Training and Handling

On March 7, USDA opened its doors for a public meeting to discuss a new AC policy for training and handling potentially dangerous animals and other concerns from the public and from regulated businesses.

Dr. Enrique Figueroa, Deputy Under Secretary for USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Programs mission area, welcomed the approximately 80 attendees. His speech praised AC's increased efforts in recent years to protect animals regulated under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the Horse Protection Act. Dr. Ron DeHaven, Deputy Administrator for AC, hosted question-and-answer sessions. Attendees also had the opportunity to attend two of four breakout sessions with AC field and headquarters staff to discuss issues related to (1) training and handling potentially dangerous animals, (2) zoos, (3) circuses, and (4) dealers, research, and transportation.

The training and handling sessions were popular because of the draft policy recently published for comment in the Federal Register. The policy statement was drafted and published in response to requests from the general public, regulated industries, and APHIS inspectors to provide more guidance about how to comply with requirements pertaining to training and handling of potentially dangerous animals (e.g., lions, tigers, bears, and elephants). Before implementing the policy, USDA sought and accepted public comments until April 18.

On July 24, 1997, APHIS published a notice in the Federal Register requesting information about practices used for training and handling potentially dangerous animals. Specifics included the type of training and level of experience trainers and handlers of such animals should have. More than 400 comments were received. The current policy under consideration is in response to these comments as well as AC's direct experience in enforcing the AWA and its regulations.

Budget Increase Means More Inspectors

AC was pleased to learn that its budget will be increased by nearly \$1 million this year. This adjustment brings AC to approximately \$10.1 million for FY 2000, up from nearly \$9.2 million in FY 1999. These funds will allow AC to increase its staff of inspectors from 64 to 71. AC has recently filled positions in Las Vegas, NV, Richmond, VA, and Mansfield, MO.

Another goal of AC's strategic direction has been filled: all its inspectors are now equipped with cellular phones.

AC Updates Strategic Direction

In February, AC released an updated strategic direction document for the animal welfare program. This document revised the 1996 original because, since then, several objectives have been met. The new strategic direction highlights these accomplishments and identifies areas that need new or continued improvement. Check out the complete report at www.aphis.usda.gov/ac/strategicplan.html on the AC Website.

Eastern Region Completes Move

The AC Eastern Region office completed its move to Raleigh, NC, in fall 1999. The new address and fax number are listed in the information box on this page. The Central Region office in Fort Worth, TX, has not moved but has a new mailing address.

USDA–APHIS–Animal Care

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Innovative Enforcement Team Wins Vice Presidential Award

AC, APHIS' Investigative and Enforcement Services, and USDA's Office of the General Counsel won Vice President Al Gore's Hammer Award for reinventing government for their innovative enforcement of the AWA. Their innovative techniques allow many cases to be settled without a hearing, which saves time and taxpayers' money and allows for more flexible use of penalty monies.

Previously, most fines went to the U.S. Treasury. In many settlement agreements, fines are now targeted to improving the well-being of animals, such as through specific facility improvements, donations to research on animal care issues, and employee training.

When a settlement is not acceptable for the violations committed, USDA still goes after stringent enforcement. AC and USDA are working together to improve collections of fines, including cooperating with the Department of Justice and Internal Revenue Service.

USDA Participates in Emergency Planning for Pets in Disasters

In September 1999, Hurricane Floyd displaced tens of thousands of animals throughout North Carolina and the Southeastern United States. USDA sent experts into the field to assess the damage to livestock but learned that many of the animals affected were domestic pets.

As a result, officials from APHIS' AC and Veterinary Services programs and Michael V. Dunn, Under Secretary for USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Programs, met several times with disaster planners from other Federal agencies and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the American Humane Association, and the American Veterinary Medical Association to discuss how best to ensure the well-being of pets in disasters.

The issue was further discussed at an open meeting during the National Animal Disaster Conference 2000 in Orlando, FL, on March 22–24. The conference was cosponsored by HSUS, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida Division of Emergency Management, and USDA. Dunn gave the keynote speech for the conference.

The meetings allowed USDA officials to examine the disaster strategies of various animal protection groups and discuss how the Department can support efforts to work with owners of companion animals before, during, and after crises.

AC Holds Course for Field Staff on Research Issues

All AC's field and supervisory veterinary medical officers attended a training course that focused on issues related to inspecting research facilities. AC conducted the course at its Riverdale, MD, headquarters February 29 to March 3. The course was designed to clarify AC policies developed in support of the AWA and to develop a better understanding of issues faced by regulated facilities. Specifically, conference attendees examined the role and functions of Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees, pain and distress issues, and alternative methods of research.

In addition to sharing information, AC employees benefitted from the knowledge of many outside experts. Speakers and panel members included representatives from the academic research community, researchers from industry, and other Federal officials who regulate those who use covered animals in their research.

In his welcoming speech, Dr. Enrique Figueroa, Deputy Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, noted that these outside experts "bring to the table the most current and up-to-date developments." He added, "Most importantly, as representatives of many of the kinds of research organizations we regulate, they add a unique dimension to the conference. Sadly, it's not often enough that both regulators and those that are regulated actually sit down together in constructive forums like this."

This was the first AC-sponsored conference since 1991 that was dedicated strictly to inspecting programs that use animals in research, testing, and training and the many complex and evolving issues associated with them.

Army Veterinarian Works With AC on Research Policies

In July, Lt. Col. Pete Schultheiss, a veterinary medical officer, from the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps, completes a year-long detail to AC to work on research-related policies. He has become a key staff officer and was instrumental in the success of the research conference AC held for its employees February 29 to March 3. His next assignment is to the office of the Navy Surgeon General. Dr. Schultheiss is board certified in laboratory animal medicine by the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine.

AC and Research Groups Collaborate To Improve Care

AC, the New Jersey Association for Biomedical Research (NJABR), and the Pennsylvania Society for Biomedical Research (PSBR) jointly sponsored an educational symposium in December 1999 in Plainsboro, NJ. About 125 members of NJABR and PSBR and 15 AC employees attended, including AC's deputy administrator.

The symposium included two panel discussions: Animal Use and Care in Research, and Regulation and Oversight. Four industry representatives spoke about the unique aspects of different types of research (academic, pharmaceutical, international) for animal care and use. Representatives from five organizations that regulate or assess animal use (USDA, the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, the Institute for Laboratory Animal Research, and the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International) described their unique processes and activities for regulation and oversight.

After the panel sessions, eight work groups met to discuss improvements in the regulatory process. Work groups were comoderated by members of NJABR or PSBR and USDA inspectors. They discussed alternatives to procedures that may cause more than momentary pain or distress, optimization of communication, use of performance standards, reference sharing, dispute resolution, the inspection process, FOIA, and the changing focus of inspections.

In a general session followup, each work group reported on its suggestions and insights into the process. Dr. Michael Kastello, president of NJABR, and Dr. DeHaven then responded to the input from the groups.

Evaluations of the meeting were very positive. The participants welcomed the opportunity to interact with USDA inspectors and appreciated USDA's positive attitude and willingness to discuss the regulatory process.

AC Takes a Position on Pet Ownership of Potentially Dangerous Large Cats

In February, AC published a position statement that said large wild and exotic cats make dangerous pets. The intent of the publication is to discourage individuals without specialized training, experience, and facilities from keeping these animals as pets. In many instances, people unwittingly buy tiger or lion cubs, which later turn into several-hundred-pound cats that are capable of injuring or killing people. AC is also concerned about the animals' well-being. Large cats require special diets, housing, veterinary care, and husbandry practices. Many also are subjected to unnecessary surgeries, such as declawing and defanging, to make them "better pets." The complete position statement is available on the AC Website (www.aphis.usda.gov/ac/acindex.html).

Inspectors Go Above and Beyond for Animal Well-Being

Thanks to the extra efforts of AC inspectors Charlie Curren and Don Borchert, 3 Russian bears, 3 servals, 60 sugar gliders, 2 hedgehogs, 40 dogs, and about 70 birds of various types are now enjoying good living conditions.

Curren, who is based in Conroe, TX, helped place the abandoned Russian bears, which were left by their owners in a semitrailer at a licensed facility in Texas. The bears were too much for anyone who tried to feed or handle them, including the local veterinarian, who tried to tranquilize them. Curren arranged for help from the Houston Zoo, which sent a veterinarian and animal handlers. Curren also contacted a licensed refuge for exotic animals in the San Antonio area; officials there agreed to accept the bears and provide ongoing care for them.

Borchert, based in Mandan, ND, helped rescue the other menagerie of animals, which were found in bad conditions in a home in Sykeston, ND. After the Souris Valley Humane Society in Minot told Borchert that the county sheriff needed help confiscating the animals, Borchert contacted the directors of Dakota Zoo in Bismarck and the Roosevelt Zoo in Minot; both agreed to help. The Dakota Zoo agreed to take the wild and exotic animals and to either keep them or find a home for them at another zoo. The dogs were taken to the local animal shelter.

"Sam's" Reunited With Their Families

Sammy the Samoyed dog and Sam the cat may think it was luck that reunited them with their owners, but AC's Missing Pet Network (MPN) played a big part.

Someone in Ohio heard about a Samoyed in a shelter in Florida and posted it to the breed list. The Florida rescue group had a home checked out and waiting for Sammy when the owner of the breed list suggested checking the MPN listings. There they found a listing for a missing Samoyed—same age and sex and within the right timeframe—filed at a different shelter. The rescue coordinator called the number listed, and today a very happy Sammy is home with his equally thrilled family and a newly reinforced fence.

Sam the cat disappeared almost 2 years ago. In March 1999, his owner posted Sam's picture and accompanying information on the MPN. Recently, an animal rescuer in Atlanta found an abandoned cat that was suffering from deliberately inflicted injuries. Through the MPN, the rescuer discovered the cat was Sam and, with the help of several others, reunited him with his owner.

More information about the MPN can be found at www.missingpet.net or by contacting AC at (301) 734-7833 or ace@usda.gov.

E-FOIA Down, New Data Base Up

APHIS' electronic Freedom of Information Act (E-FOIA) Website, where summary information from AC inspection reports could be retrieved, was not Y2K compliant and came down on December 31, 1999. APHIS is hard at work developing a new E-FOIA site.

Currently, inspection reports must be requested in writing from the regional offices. The new system will eventually include access to these reports through E-FOIA via AC's new Licensing and Registration Information System (LARIS), which became functional October 1, 1999.

“Site” Redefined

During FY 1999, AC implemented a new definition of “site” for inspected facilities—all facilities with the same geographic location will be considered one site. Previously, a site was determined on a case-by-case basis by the inspector and the facility representative. Consequently, there was a wide range of inconsistencies among facilities. Now, as a general rule, all facilities within a 35-mile radius are considered one site. The intention is that all the locations at one site can be inspected within a normal commuting distance.

Wise Old Dog Gives Safe Travel Tips

The safe pet travel campaign, which has provided information to tens of thousands of travelers, will reach even more people with a new public service announcement (PSA) for television. The animated spot is scheduled for distribution this April, in time for the summer tourist season. In the PSA, an experienced traveling dog tells another dog what he’s done to make his flight as safe and comfortable as possible. He says, for example, “I’ve booked my humans on the same flight, coach of course.”

In FY 1998, APHIS distributed 20,000 copies of AC’s “Traveling With Your Pet” brochure and printed 40,000 more in FY 1999. The brochure and other materials such as kennel stickers provide a toll-free number for APHIS’ automated telephone voice response system. Calls to access information about transporting animals under the AWA increased from more than 2,500 in FY 1998 to more than 4,000 in FY 1999.

Recent Publications and Reports

You can find most of the following publications on AC’s Website, or you may request them from your regional office.

1. Animal Care Strategic Direction, March 2000
2. Position Statement: Large Wild and Exotic Cats Make Dangerous Pets, Misc. Publ. 1560, February 2000 (also available in black-and-white format for duplication)
3. Animal Care: Safeguarding the Welfare of Animals, Misc. Publ. 1558, October 1999
4. Licensing and Registration Under the AWA, Program Aid 1117, revised October 1999
5. Cómo viajar por avión con su mascota (Spanish version of Traveling With Your Pet by Air factsheet)

Policy Update

AC policies are available in full on the AC Website (www.aphis.usda.gov/ac/polman.html).

Policies Under Development

- Painful procedures (revision)
- Written narrative for alternatives to painful procedures (revision)

Policies Completed

- Licensing sales of dead animals, September 30, 1999
- Veterinary care (revised), December 20, 1999
- Guidelines for farm animals used for nonagricultural purposes, February 11, 2000

Regulatory Update

The items listed below are under consideration and not yet published in the Federal Register, were published in the Federal Register and are open for comment, or were previously open for comment and are now under review by the Department.

Notices

- Policy on training and handling of potentially dangerous animals (comment period closed 4/18)
- Petition for regulation of rats, mice, and birds (under review)
- Nonhuman primate environment enrichment policy (under review)
- Extension of approval of an information collection (comment period closed 2/7)

Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

- Define pain, distress, and painful procedure (under consideration)

Proposed Rules

- Licensing requirements for dogs and cats (under consideration)
- Identification of unweaned puppies and kittens (under consideration)
- Amend definition of exhibitor (under consideration)
- Exotic canids and felids: minimum age for transport (under consideration)
- Veterinary medical records (under consideration)
- Incorporation of American Veterinary Medical Association standards for euthanasia (under consideration)
- Regulation of wholesale dealers of hunting, breeding, and security dogs (under consideration)

- Marine mammals: nonconsensus language and interactive programs (under consideration)
- Acclimation certificates for dogs and cats (under review)

Final Rules

- Confiscation of animals (under consideration)
- Marine mammals: consensus language (under consideration)
- Amendment to the definition of field study (published 2/9)

Technical Amendments

- Perimeter fencing (under consideration)

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